

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

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CANVASBACK, REDHEAD DUCKS TO BE AIDED BY RESTRICTIVE HUNTING REGULATIONS, BUT COMEBACK PROCESS WILL BE GRADUAL, ASSISTANT SECRETARY REED SAYS

Assistant Secretary of the Interior Nathaniel Reed, who heads the Department's programs for fish, wildlife, parks, and outdoor recreation, said today he is hopeful that special restrictions on hunting of canvasback and redhead ducks will aid the recovery of these species which have suffered long-term population declines.

"Many factors have contributed to this decline, however, and the comeback of canvasbacks and redheads will be a gradual process," Reed said. He indicated that hunters can expect several more years of restrictive regulations.

Population estimates for canvasbacks and redheads are imperfect, but Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service believes that wintering canvasbacks numbered less than 250,000 in 1973 and redheads less than 300,000. The two species combined accounted for less than two percent of the fall flight of ducks in the United States last fall.

For the second consecutive year, canvasbacks and redheads may not be hunted in the Atlantic flyway. In the Mississippi and Central flyways, these species may not be taken in specified areas (see footnote) where they normally concentrate. Elsewhere in these flyways, where both species are scarce, shooters may bag one canvasback or one redhead. The birds are worth the maximum 100 points in areas where the point system applies.

Selected areas (see footnote) of the Pacific flyway are also closed to canvasback hunting, but one canvasback may be taken elsewhere. Regular bag limits apply to redheads in the Pacific flyway. While the status of redheads in the westernmost flyway is better than elsewhere, biologists are keeping a close watch on the situation.

The areas in the Central and Mississippi flyways that are closed to canvasback and redhead hunting total less than five percent of all habitat. They are, however, the locations where historically many cans and redheads have been taken.

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Canvasbacks and redheads need more special habitat and nesting conditions than other highly prized game ducks. They require dead vegetation over water for nesting and congregate during fall and winter on deep water areas that now are often polluted.

These species are not aggressive reproducers. Some females may not nest until their second or third year of life. Canvasback females are vulnerable to predation while on the nest and, as a result, canvasback males predominate in the population. Nests of both species are highly vulnerable to the raccoon, which in recent years has greatly extended its range north into prime duck nesting territory.

Canvasback and redhead young especially are vulnerable to the gun. As one biologist put it, they are "suckers for decoys" and their flight habits are predictable.

These and possibly other factors appear to have contributed to their decline in recent years.

A special \$200,000 study of canvasbacks presently is underway by the Service, with much of the work being done at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center near Laurel, Md., and the Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center in Jamestown, N. Dak. Scientists hope to learn more about the bird's biology and habitat needs. They also want to add to their knowledge about the environmental menaces which have combined to create serious problems for canvasbacks. With added knowledge, better management may be possible.

Increased research efforts for redheads also are planned in the near future.

1/ Mississippi flyway areas closed to canvasback and redhead hunting are:

Mississippi River - Entire river, both sides, from Keokuk Dam upstream to Prescott, Minnesota, at junction of St. Croix River.

Alabama - Baldwin and Mobile Counties.

Louisiana - Caddo, St. Charles, and St. Mary's Parishes.

Michigan - Bay, Muskegon, Huron, McComb, St. Clair, Tuscola, Wayne, and Monroe Counties.

Minnesota - Statewide.

Missouri - St. Charles County.

Ohio - Ottawa County.

Tennessee - Kentucky Lake lying north of Interstate Highway 40.

Wisconsin - In the Mississippi River Zone, all that part of Wisconsin west of the CB&Q Railroad in Grant, Crawford, Vernon, LaCrosse, Trempealeau, Buffalo, Pepin, and Pierce Counties. Also, Dodge and Winnebago Counties and the water area and land area extending 100 yards from the shoreline of Lake Poygan, Waushara County, Lake Winnebago, Calumet and Fond du Lac County, and Rush Lake, Fond du Lac County.

2/ Central flyway areas closed to canvasback and redhead hunting are:

North Dakota - All that portion east of State Highway 3, including all or portions of 27 counties.

South Dakota - The counties of Brookings, Codington, Day, Kingsbury, Lake, Roberts, Marshall, and Hamlin.

Texas - The counties of Aransas, Brazoria, Calhoun, Cameron, Chambers, Galveston, Harris, Jackson, Jefferson, Kenedy, Kleberg, Matagorda, Nueces, Refugio, San Patricio, and Willacy.

3/ Pacific flyway areas closed to canvasback and redhead hunting are:

California - San Francisco Bay-Suisan area--beginning at the Golden Gate Bridge, north on U.S. Highway 101 to State Highway 37; then east on State Highway 37 to U.S. Highway 80; then north on U.S. Highway 80 to State Highway 12 at Fairfield; then east on State Highway 12 to Rio Vista at State Highway 84 (160); then south on State Highway 84 (160) to State Highway 4; then west on State Highway 4 to U.S. Highway 80; then south on U.S. Highway 80 to State Highway 17; then south on State Highway 17 to U.S. Highway 101 at San Jose; then north on U.S. Highway 101 to point of beginning. Salton Sea--entire water area of Salton Sea.

Nevada - Churchill County.

Oregon - Lincoln and Harney Counties.

Washington - Grays Harbor and Pacific Counties.

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